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AUTHOR Stoynoff, Stephen J.
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ABSTRACT

A review of literature on organizational theory and educational administration focuses on strategies for successful introduction of planned curriculum changes or program improvements in English-as-a-Second-Language programs. Three important considerations in the implementation of change--the nature of educational organizations, the change process, and appropriate change strategies for improving educational programs--are addressed. A list of specific suggestions for those intending to introduce a curriculum change or programming innovation is provided, including: (1) fostering an atmosphere promoting change; (2) building consensus by compromising with and coopting those who resist change and reassuring those who do not; (3) instilling confidence by demonstrating mastery of the details and specifics related to the proposed change; (4) appreciating the importance of timing; (5) adapting proposed changes or innovations to the specific setting in which they will be implemented; (6) adequately communicating with and disseminating information regarding the change to all affected individuals and units; (7) ensuring that key individuals support the innovation, if possible, before attempting to broaden support; (8) expanding support among like-minded individuals and beginning to build coalitions; (9) building in rewards and incentives to promote cooperation among other units and outside individuals; and (10) preparing for a postadaptation period. (MSE)

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Successfully Implementing Educational Change and Innovation

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (23rd, San Antonio, TX March 7-11, 1989).

Stephen J. Stoynoff

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Abstract

There is growing appreciation of the pivotal role curriculum plays in the provision of instruction in ESL programs, and this has contributed to a significant increase in the amount of attention directed toward curriculum issues in general and curriculum development in particular in recent years. However, few if any articles have addressed the issue of planning for and implementing ESL curriculum changes and program improvements. This paper seeks to introduce ESL specialists to the substantial body of literature that exists in the fields of organizational theory and educational administration that may be used to increase the successful introduction of planned curriculum changes or program improvements in ESL settings.

Successfully Implementing Educational Change and Innovation

Times change; students change; and so educational programs must change or suffer the consequences. Few programs can afford to ignore the needs of their students or fail to respond to the specific circumstances of the program. Because English as a second language (ESL) programs are especially vulnerable to the vicissitudes of international political and economic events, periodic curriculum changes and programming innovations have become familiar features in the life-cycles of most of them. These changes and innovations are, at once, natural and necessary responses to the evolving needs of the students and the changing circumstances of the educational program.

ESL programs, in the public schools, community colleges, and universities, expend considerable time and energy attempting to introduce curriculum changes and programming innovations. While new initiatives occasionally encounter vigorous, organized resistance, benign indifference and inertia probably claim the greatest number of casualties in the battle to introduce change and innovation. Without a thorough understanding of the change process, even the most well-intentioned ESL professionals may find their proposed change seriously threatened or, even worse, thwarted. Yet, those persons responsible for implementing planned changes can significantly improve their chances of success if they appreciate the nature of educational organizations, understand the change process, and adopt appropriate change strategies for improving their educational programs. This paper addresses important aspects of each of these three considerations and concludes with a list of suggestions for those persons intending to introduce a curriculum change or programming innovation.

The Nature of Educational Organizations

Educational institutions are extremely complex social organizations and, as such, they share the same features of all formal social organizations.

Kimbrough and Nunnery (1983) have defined a set of four characteristics that distinguish social organizations: (1) they select leaders; (2) they determine and assign specific roles; (3) they develop particular goals and purposes; and (4) they must attain their goals and purposes to sustain the organization. Baldridge and Deal (1983) would add one more characteristic to the set: change. According to them, "the most stable fact about organizations, including schools and colleges, is that they change. You can count on it--if you leave an organization for a few years and return, it will be different" (Baldridge & Deal, 1983:1).

While they may share numerous similarities, no two organizations are exactly alike. Levine (1980) asserts that every organization has a unique set of norms, values, and goals that combine to form an organizational character. This ethos contributes to a shared mystique, whether it is of a University of Michigan ELI faculty member or a "Big Blue" (i.e., IBM) sales representative. Preoccupation with collective identity is not limited to business organizations; educational institutions and government organizations strive to instill and to project a particular ethos as well.

For obvious reasons, academic institutions seek to promote their distinct identities. Nevertheless, Baldridge (1983) claims that educational organizations have five important common characteristics which distinguish them from other social organizations. First, they have ambiguous goals. Academic institutions exist essentially to transmit knowledge, develop skills and abilities, and inculcate values. ESL programs more specifically seek to improve the students' discrete knowledge of the English language and to develop the skills and abilities necessary to effectively participate in American society. Yet, even these educational goals are not easy to objectify or to assess.

Second, academic organizations provide a client-centered service to clients who have disparate needs. ESL client needs include literacy training and general education for elementary and secondary school students, survival and vocational ESL for adult refugees, and English for academic purposes for students at the community college and university level. A third characteristic is the inconsistent provision of services to clients in

educational settings. Even when using the same materials and teaching to the same curriculum objective it is not possible to ensure that every teacher or program will provide students with the same quality learning experiences. Fourth, educational institutions are comprised of highly trained professional staffs that come from extremely diverse academic backgrounds. ESL programs often represent a microcosm of the broader educational organization with members who have been trained in a wide variety of academic disciplines. Unlike law firms, hospitals, or certain business enterprises, faculties represent one of the most eclectic collections of highly trained individuals regularly required to work together.

Finally, academic organizations are environmentally vulnerable. Most institutions are obliged to remain in specific geographical locations, partly out of tradition, but more often due to financial requirements or political decree, and they must suffer the consequences of this risk. Publicly funded and mandated ESL programs are often at the mercy of the voters or elected officials whose willingness to fund their activities are frequently determined by current economic and political conditions.

The organizational structure of educational institutions has traditionally been defined in terms of two ideal types: the bureaucratic model, largely attributed to Max Weber, and the collegial model, eloquently articulated and advocated by John Millett (1962). Although there is strong appeal in the notion of a community of scholars participating in the management of the system in a spirit of cooperative democracy, most institutions have been characterized as carefully structured bureaucracies, that is, until recently.

In recent years, a number of researchers have begun to challenge these two classical models of educational organization. In particular, Cohen and March (1974), drawing upon the initial work of Glassman, suggest that educational institutions are really an aggregate of autonomous individuals each making individual decisions, whether they are individual student decisions (e.g., in terms of whether to attend class or not), individual faculty decisions (e.g., in terms of what course to teach), or individual departmental/program decisions (e.g., in terms of what courses to offer or which curriculum model to select). In this complex milieu of individualized decision-making, the

superordinate goals of an institution or program may be lost or, at least, not shared by every member of the organization, thereby contributing to a sense of controlled chaos. Cohen and March label their model "organized anarchy."

Karl Weick (1978) has proposed a closely related paradigm called the "loose-coupling model." Units that comprise an educational organization are thought to be only weakly linked to one another. Hence, they are minimally interrelated which, in turn, promotes significant autonomy, indifference, and, to a certain extent, antipathy toward other units in the organization. This frequently frustrates cooperation between the various units in the institution (e.g., between a language institute and its academic department).

Baldridge (1971), in an extensive case study of New York University, came to the conclusion that educational organizations operate as a set of power blocs, each attempting to lobby, to persuade, and, when necessary, to form coalitions intended to secure the most favorable terms and conditions possible for either the unit or for the individual. He likens the model to what occurs in a cabinet form of government and calls it a "political" model of educational organization.

At this point, a consensus has not emerged regarding which model most accurately depicts the way educational institutions are organized. In fact, it is possible that each of these models reveals an element of truth about educational organizations, and that schools do not operate on an exclusively bureaucratic, collegial, political, or loosely-coupled basis. Instead, it is likely that the ethos of the institution and the nature of its specific circumstances are the primary determinants of the model or combination of models that emerge. Identifying the organizational patterns that appear to be operating at one's institution, then, is an important preliminary step in the process of initiating any planned change or innovation.

Understanding the Change Process

Lindquist, a major figure in the academic change and innovation literature, observes, "The obstacles to academic innovation are many and great, and the motivation appears weak" (Lindquist, 1974:330). Any change in the status

quo necessitates a reallocation of the increasingly limited resources in academic institutions. Resources such as space, money, and release-time are scarce commodities in most schools. The implementation of a significant change or innovation of any kind is an immediate threat to secured positions and established allocation patterns in the organization. In many cases, it requires reductions in one area to fund dispersements in another. For example, an ESL program may need to fund expenses associated with a curriculum development project by using the funds dedicated to the purchase of new office equipment, thereby postponing the acquisition of additional personal computers for the program. If there is a difference of opinion among faculty over program priorities, the curriculum change may be postponed, scaled back, or dropped. For this reason, change implementors must be prepared to accommodate and to effectively deal with the various constituencies affected by a proposed change. Moreover, commitment and interest must be sustained over the course of the change effort. Inertia is, perhaps, the most distinguishing characteristic of large social organizations, and schools are no exception.

There are numerous problems which can diminish the likelihood of implementing a change or innovation. Watson (1969) has suggested five such obstacles to innovation that appear to be inherent in all social systems. They include the demand that individual members conform to the institution's norms; the resistance to any perceived threat to the prestige or economic security of individual members; the rejection of any reform which affects that which is held sacrosanct; the resistance to change initiated by those perceived to be "outsiders"; and sensitivity to the implications a given change has for other units or individuals within the social system.

Levine (1980), in a review of the literature on academic change and innovation, highlights seven factors that limit innovation in university settings. These factors have been gleaned from the work of Hefferlin (1969) and are largely attributed to the nature of academics and the historical traditions of U.S. higher education. However, it can be argued that the factors outlined below probably are applicable to U.S. educators in general, whether they operate in a university setting or community college and public school settings. First, faculty members are perceived as autonomous,

highly-specialized professionals who differ in their individual values, goals, and attitudes. Hence, forging a consensus is not easy. Second, educators are the product of years of socialization in an academic setting. Any innovation that is inconsistent with accepted procedures runs the risk of being rejected. Third, academics tend to be suspicious of any attempts to make education more efficient or to make the outcomes more measurable.

Fourth, academic institutions, as repositories of knowledge and the principal mechanisms for the perpetuation of culture, are basically conservative. Fifth, institutions are carefully structured to restrict rapid change. The extensive formal procedures necessary before a change may be initiated attests to this fact. Sixth, with few exceptions, institutional reputations in American higher education have not been the result of major innovations. For the most notable exceptions (e.g., Antioch, Reed, and Swarthmore) refer to Clark, 1970; or Rudolph, 1981. Finally, accreditation and the need to remain similar enough to facilitate the enrollment and transfer of students from not only secondary schools but also community colleges and other colleges and universities discourage academic institutions from differing too significantly.

Lindquist (1974) would add to the previous list of obstacles several others. The most important, perhaps, is that most faculty are not aware of the body of theory and practice related to teaching and learning that might make them more receptive to innovations and changes in curricula or educational programming. Also, it is difficult to measure, with any degree of accuracy, the relative advantages of one academic innovation over another. And finally, the threat to secured positions cannot be underestimated.

While there may be a preponderance of obstacles that frustrate and thwart attempts to introduce change into academic settings, it is important to point out that there exist conditions that contribute to change and innovation as well. Research indicates that change is most likely to occur in educational settings characterized by either especially stable, supportive environments or especially unstable environments. Hunkins (1980), in this regard, provides a useful distinction between change that is in response to specific events, deficit change, and change that is in anticipation of present or future institutional needs, creative change.

In extremely stable environments, where economic and political circumstances do not threaten institutional progress, creative changes and innovations are likely to receive thoughtful consideration. The continuity provided by extremely stable institutions allows for the presentation of carefully planned and implemented changes that receive maximum attention, sustained effort, and the participation of the greatest number of affected individuals.

Unfortunately, most ESL programs do not operate in stable environments. Political and economic events are capable of exercising a profound and immediate impact on the student populations of most ESL programs. Moreover, most college and university ESL programs are operated on a self-support basis that makes them even more vulnerable than the programs in the public schools and community colleges. The tentative status of ESL programs only underscores their need to effectively respond to defict changes in their environments and to actively prepare for and undertake creative changes as well.

It is important to point out though, that the very instability that threatens ESL programs may in fact contribute to conditions that promote innovation and change. In a study of 110 U.S. colleges and universities (Hefferlin, 1969), it was found that the most significant condition for producing educational innovation was institutional instability. The instability of innovative institutions was attributed to changes in: (1) key administrative positions; (2) changes in faculty or staff because of low tenure rates, limited promotion opportunities, or large-scale rapid increases or decreases in personnel; (3) changes in market conditions; (4) changes in the local community; and (5) the lack of a static graduate school ethic which discouraged change.

For example, the decline in the numbers of traditional, college-age students in the U.S. reflects a change in market conditions. This has produced a deficit change among many tuition-dependent U.S. colleges and universities. In large part, the recent proliferation of English as a second language programs among these institutions is more than simply an attempt to internationalize

U.S. campuses. For many tuition-dependent institutions, enrolling more matriculated and non-matriculated international students has been one way to offset the economic realities of a demographic decline in the traditional U.S. student population, while promoting the internationalization of the institution.

Lindquist (1974) maintains that another condition which contributes to change in academic institutions is the existence of particular individuals who function as innovation links between their institutions and outside sources of innovative ideas and practices. Newly recruited employees constitute one major source of new ideas for educational institutions. Since considerable mobility exists among faculty members and principal administrators, particularly in higher education settings, there are ample opportunities for the inter-institutional transfer of successful curriculum models or programming innovations as employees transfer from one institution to another. A content-based curriculum project the author participated in at Lewis and Clark College has served as a model for a similar curriculum project currently underway in the intensive English program at Central Washington University.

Another especially important innovation link includes those persons Lindquist labels "cosmopolitans." These are individuals who have wide-ranging interests, extensive professional networks, and considerable interaction with individuals outside the campus community. Cosmopolitans are very effective channels for bringing external knowledge back to an institution. Clearly, ESL professionals, with their extensive international experience, tenuous employment conditions (i.e., largely part-time and non-tenured), and interdisciplinary academic preparation represent a powerful innovation link in academic institutions. As ESL professionals move in and out of institutions and from one country to another, they provide international as well as inter-institutional innovation links. Unfortunately, their value in this respect is often overlooked or underappreciated.

A final, albeit, less significant, innovation link in institutions is provided by those individuals engaged in academic research and experimentation. Since the vast majority of ESL faculty are practitioners rather than researchers,

this category may not be a significant source of innovation links in an ESL program. Yet, occasionally, researchers working either in an ESL program or in a closely related field will produce results of their work that, when it is presented in terms that are comprehensible to other members of the academic community, may be a valuable source of new ideas or an impetus for change.

Planned changes are introduced into academic institutions in fairly predictable patterns that have several distinct stages. Three change models found in the literature (Fullan, 1982; Levine, 1974; Hunkins, 1980) distinguish between four separate phases in the process of introducing planned changes. The first stage entails the acknowledgement of a need by an individual or group and the development of strategies designed to satisfy it. The second stage generally involves the implementation of the change, usually on a trial basis, following the approval of the appropriate persons or units. Next, there follows a period of continuation and evaluation of the outcomes of the change. Finally, based upon the assessment of outcomes, the change is either terminated or institutionalized.

A two-year curriculum project undertaken at Lewis and Clark College's Institute for the Study of American Language and Culture followed this same general pattern. The impetus for change was the growing perception among faculty members that the existing curriculum document, which divided language skills into the traditional skill areas of reading, writing, grammar, and listening/speaking, no longer reflected classroom practice because skills were increasingly being integrated and taught through content areas.

This, in turn, led to the development of an entirely new approach to defining and organizing the content of the curriculum. A series of linguistic and socio-cultural performance objectives were developed for each course and each level of the program. Following a one-year trial period, the project was judged to be successful and was adopted.

Adopting Successful Strategies for Educational Change

Because implementing planned change is a lengthy, complex undertaking, it is not always easy to discern when or if a given change has been successful. Baldridge observes that "Planned change is very difficult to produce, often results in intense political conflict, and usually ends far from where its originators intended" (Baldridge, 1983:4). Certainly, the most obvious indication of whether a change has been successfully implemented is whether it is adopted and persists following a trial period and subsequent assessment. In this case, the same factors that work against the initial introduction of innovation and change into academic organizations can begin to work to the advantage of a particular change, once it has been adopted. Inertia and the passage of time often combine to ultimately institutionalize a change after a trial implementation has been approved.

In an extensive review of over 1,500 studies of successful innovations, Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) have identified five critical characteristics that typify and increase the likelihood that an innovation will be adopted: (1) relative advantage, (2) compatibility, (3) complexity, (4) trialability, and (5) observability. Relative advantage is the extent to which an innovation is thought to be better than the existing idea or practice it supercedes. Compatibility is the extent to which an innovation is consistent with prevailing norms and past experiences of an organization. Complexity is the extent to which the innovation is able to be understood and is easy to use. Trialabilty is the extent to which the innovation may be undertaken on a limited or experimental basis. Observability is the extent to which the innovation is visible and perceived by others. Clearly, curriculum planners and program developers must carefully consider their innovations with respect to these five critical characteristics in order to optimize the success of any planned change.

Lindquist (1974:325) offers a paradigm that provides a useful means of analyzing the chances of successfully implementing a proposed change or innovation. He identifies three different levels of need (i.e., individual, sub-group, and organization) and three different types of need (i.e., survival, status/esteem, and values or formal goals) that affect individuals' proclivity to embrace an innovation. Lindquist maintains that the more levels and

	Survival	Status/Esteem	Formal Goals
Individual	holding my job	tenure, promotion, reputation	scholarship, teaching effectiveness
Sub-groups	maintaining dept. FTEs	national visibility, graduate programs	producing majors & research discoveries
Organizations	keeping up enrollments	higher educational & public acclaim	educating students, advancing knowledge, meeting student needs

Figure 1.

From: Lindquist, Jack C. 1974. Polictical linkage: the academic-innovation process. *Journal of Higher Education* 45 (5):323-343.

likelihood that it will be successfully implemented. Conversely, the fewer levels and types of need in the grid that are satisfied, the higher the risk the proposed innovation will be rejected. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that an innovation which threatens a large number of boxes in the grid stands little chance of being successfully implemented. Refer to Figure 1.

Lindquist hypothesizes that the strongest motivations occur in the top left corner of the grid, while the weakest motivations are found in the bottom right corner. This paradigm is consistent with Maslow's work and would seem to have face validity. That is, individual survival and self-interest prevails over abstract values and formal organizational goals during times of uncertainty or when threats are introduced into an individual's environment.

A curriculum change usually does not directly threaten the job security of individual ESL faculty members, unless those individuals lack the training or background necessary to competently deliver the curriculum. However, if a proposed curriculum requires more effort, or is construed to threaten student enrollments, self-interest is likely to take precedence over any inherent value the new curriculum may have or any recognition (status or esteem) it might bring the program. Programming innovations that include the redefinition of responsibilities or reduction of staff are almost certain to be perceived as threats to individual survival regardless of how positively they may impact the other boxes in Lindquist's grid.

Perhaps most useful to those persons responsible for implementing curriculum changes and program improvements is a synthesis of the theories of planned change culled from the research literature and presented here as a ten-step formula for successful change. What follows combines what this author has learned from guiding several successful curriculum projects and what Arthur Levine (1980:210) has carefully culled from the work of five significant figures in the field of planned change research (i.e., Bennis, Conrad, Lindquist, Martorana and Kuhns). These ten considerations represent a recipe, if you will, for successfully introducing change or innovation into educational settings.

(1) First foster an atmosphere that promotes change. This is achieved by persuading the affected parties to openly consider the shortcomings of the existing situation. At Lewis and Clark College, a consensus had already emerged that a curriculum change was necessary. At Central Washington University, it was necessary to lobby individual faculty members and to convince them that the existing curriculum did not adequately address the needs of students.

(2) Next, build consensus by compromising with and coopting those who resist and reassuring those who are anxious. Deemphasize the threats associated with the proposed change and assiduously avoid stalemates and no-win situations. At Portland Community College, a curriculum team was equally divided between those who favored organizing content of the competency-based curriculum in terms of the traditional split between productive and receptive skills and those who believed in a more notional-functional orientation. In the end, the team leader was able to persuade the dissenting members to accept a thinly veiled compromise that required oral and written production of some content and only recognition of other specific items and incorporated some notional-functional categories.

(3) Instill confidence by demonstrating that you have mastered the details and specifics related to the proposed change (i.e., be sure you know what you are talking about). Be assertive and do not settle for insubstantial changes. Tactfully outflank and confront opposition. At Central Washington University, this meant carefully reviewing curriculum models and being able to articulate the strengths and weaknesses of each vis-a-vis the CWU intensive program.

(4) Upon establishing an atmosphere conducive to introducing a change, appreciate the importance of timing. Consolidate gains before moving to the next stage in the change process. Spending an inordinate amount of time in the planning stage may be as harmful as moving to implement a trial period prematurely. At Portland Community College, pieces of the pilot curriculum were field-tested as they were developed rather than waiting to test the

entire project after it was completed. This avoided the danger of getting bogged down in the planning stage and kept the process moving forward.

(5) Adapt proposed changes or innovations to your own particular setting. It is unrealistic and may even be counterproductive to attempt to adopt a change or innovation from another institution without considering its implications for your institution and circumstances. The intensive program at Lewis and Clark was staffed principally by full-time faculty and it experienced low turnover rates. Intensive programs that also operate as teacher training programs (e.g., Central Washington) often utilize fewer full-time faculty and employ teaching assistants who generally have shorter tenures in the program. Attempting to adopt a curriculum that functions well in one setting without considering its implications for your own specific circumstances may be a mistake.

(6) Adequately communicate with and disseminate information regarding the change to all affected individuals and units. Ignorance of the rationale for and the value of a proposed change are frequently the biggest obstacles to obtaining support for it. Prior to implementing its competency-based survival skills curriculum, Portland Community College preceded with an extensive, paid in-service training of the part-time faculty who were expected to deliver the curriculum. The importance and value of the change was communicated thereby contributing to its successful introduction.

(7) Ensure that key administrators and "gatekeepers" are behind the innovation, if possible, before attempting to broaden support for the proposed change. At Central Washington, this took the form of ensuring that program faculty knew that the Director of International Programs shared the author's interest in and enthusiasm for the curriculum project.

(8) Then, expand support to like-minded individuals and begin to build coalitions. Encourage ownership of the change, so that active support is maximized. Because the curriculum committee at Lewis and Clark was a committee of the whole, it was relatively easy to assure that all members of the faculty shared a sense of ownership for the final product. In larger programs, or where curriculum development is the responsibility of a select

group, it is necessary to allow adequate opportunities for the other members of the program to review and make suggestions regarding the project or one risks resistance to it.

(9) Build in rewards and incentives to promote cooperation among other units and outside individuals. At Portland Community College, this took the form of permitting other teachers to use the materials and lessons that had been developed in the project in their own classrooms.

(10) Finally, prepare for the postadoption period. For as Cicero observed, "Nothing quite new is perfect" (Rawson & Miner, 1986:248). An ongoing evaluation component should be built into the curriculum or the program, so that data can be collected that will facilitate periodic refinements and modifications to the institutionalized change or innovation. The author left Lewis and Clark before the evaluation component could be developed, but work had begun on this critical aspect of the curriculum.

Attempts to change curricula are especially challenging. Hilda Taba (1962:454-5), in her classic work Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice, noted that "To change a curriculum means, in a way, to change an institution." "Changing the curriculum also involves changing individuals." Therefore, to be effective, the process must be systematic and appreciate the human dynamics involved in getting individuals to accept and to implement desired changes. Adequately communicating and mutually working out the specifics of a change reduces individuals' hostility toward it and establishes a sense of ownership towards the final change product. Incorporating tangible as well as intangible rewards for individual cooperation reduces resistance and indifference. Finally, those individuals fortunate enough to possess or to have developed the leadership skills that enable them to motivate and effectively manage colleagues will be especially successful at gaining support for proposed curriculum changes.

To summarize, this paper has demonstrated that a significant body of applicable research exists which may be drawn upon to increase the successful introduction of planned curriculum change or program improve-

ments in the field of teaching English as a second language. Moreover, curriculum developers and program administrators can significantly improve their ability to initiate educational innovations and changes when they appreciate the nature of educational organizations, understand the ways in which planned changes occur, and adopt strategies for implementing change that are consistent with both what is known about the change process and what is known about the circumstances of their own educational programs.

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